

Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about cold snacks

涼

Putonghua pronunciation: *liang2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *leung4*

Meanings: cool, chilly, chilled, disappointed, thin, unkind

涼 (radical 冫 = 水 *shui3*, water) means 清涼 (*qing1 liang2* = pure/clear~cool). 乘涼 (*cheng2 liang2* = ride~cool) means enjoying leisure, shade and 涼風 (*liang2 feng1* = cool~wind/breeze). Fan/air-conditioner sends off 涼颼颼 (*liang2 sou1 sou1* = cool~swish~ swish = cool/chilly) air-current.

Bad news makes you 涼了半截 (*liang2 le0 ban4 jie2* = cool-ed-half~section = suddenly shocked/disappointed), 心涼 (*xin1 liang2* = heart~cool = excitement/enthusiasm deflated/spent). 涼薄 (*liang2 bo2* = cool~thin) describes unkind/ungrateful person.

Cold-dish 涼拌 (*liang2 ban4* = cool~mix of shredded meat and vegetables) goes with vinegar. 涼粉 (*liang2 fen3* = cool~powder/rice-noodle = chilled black grass-jelly) goes with honey/syrup. Cantonese people 飲涼茶 (*yin3 liang2 cha2* = drink~cool~tea = drink specially-concocted darkish herbal/medicinal tea) to reduce body-heat.

by Diana Yue